

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

US NATIO 1342

AMCONSUL ZAGREB

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BELGRADE 748

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT YO

SUBJECT: TITO ON AFTER TITO WHAT

1. SUMMARY. IN INTERVIEW CARRIED IN WEEKEND MEDIA, TITO ANSWERED SUCCESSION QUESTION IN TERMS OF INSTITUTIONAL CONTINUITY OF ALREADY OPERATING STATE PRESIDENCY. "HENCE, I CAN DEPART ANY DAY...." HE ALSO DISCUSSED HIS PLACE IN HISTORY, REMINISCED ON PARTY CRISES IN WHICH HE CLEANED OUR REGIONAL LEADERSHIPS, WARNED RECALCITRANT MEMBERS BUT OFFERED A FAIR HEARING TO THE UNJUSTLY ACCUSED AND REFORMED. TITO BRIEFLY ASSESSED THE PRESENT ECONOMIC SITUATION, STRONGLY CONDEMNED ECONOMIC CRIMES AND CRIMINALS, REMINDED THE MEDIA OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AND PUT IN A GOOD WORD FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS. THE INTERVIEW WHICH FOCUSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON DOMESTIC MATTERS HAD THE AIR OF A LAST WILL. TITO, NEARLY 84, IS BORDERING ON CHRONIC ILLNESS IN HIS THIRD PROLONGED DISABLEMENT IN TWO YEARS. HIS PUBLIC CONTEMPLATING ON MORTALITY HELPS TO PREPARE YUGOSLAVS FOR HIS WITHDRAWAL FROM POWER. THIS INTERVIEW IS AN IMPORTANT ONE AND WE WILL TRY TO SQUEEZE AS MUCH INTERPRETATION FROM SECONDARY SOURCES AS POSSIBLE. END SUMMARY.

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2. YUGOSLAV PRESS FRONT-PAGED INTERVIEW OF PRESIDENT

TITO BY DARA JANEKOVIC, CORRESPONDENT OF ZAGREB DAILY "VJESNIK". THE INTERVIEW, WHICH WAS DONE IN THREE MEETINGS FROM LATE DECEMBER UNTIL A FEW DAYS AGO, WAS ALSO PRESENTED ON TELEVISION BY A TEAM OF READERS WHILE STILL PHOTOS OF TITO WERE BROADCAST. WE ASSUME FULL TEXT OF INTERVIEW AVAILABLE TO DEPARTMENT FROM ENGLISH "TANJUG WIRE" AND FBIS. FOLLOWING ARE HIGHLIGHTS.

3. AFTER TITO. JANEKOVIC STATED THAT FOREIGN PRESS IS PERIODICALLY PREOCCUPIED WITH QUESTION "WHAT AFTER TITO?" IN REPLYING, TITO NOTED THAT YUGOSLAVIA HAS COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP WITH STATE PRESIDENCY AS SUPREME BODY. ITS PRESIDENT (SIC) AND VICE PRESIDENT ARE SUBJECT TO ROTATION. THE PRESIDENCY HAS BEEN "ON THE SPOT AND IN PRACTICE FOR SEVERAL YEARS" AND HAS SHOWN ITSELF EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE AND GOOD. "HENCE I CAN DEPART ANY DAY WITHOUT ANY CHANGE TAKING PLACE."

4. JANEKOVIC ALSO MENTIONED TITO'S PLACE IN HISTORY AND HE ATTEMPTED TO SHARE CREDIT FOR IT WITH HIS COUNTRYMEN AND PARTY, BUT HE SAID THE HONOR ALSO CARRIES BURDENS AND OBLIGATIONS.

5. THE STATE OF THE LCY. TITO DWELT AT LENGTH ON PARTY CRISES OF RECENT YEARS AND THE CURRENT HEALTH OF THE LCY. REMINISCING ON THE PRE-LETTER PERIOD HE SAID THAT THE PARTY LEADERSHIPS IN SOME REPUBLICS ATTEMPTED TO EMANCIPATE THEMSELVES TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT FROM THE SENIOR LCY LEADERSHIP. THEY HELD SECRET MEETINGS, INGORED DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM AND SANK DEEP IN "THE MED OF NATIONALISM" MAKING DECISIONS BASED ON WHETHER A PERSON WAS A SERB OR A CROAT. AS A RESULT, SIAD TITO, "WE WERE OBLIGED TO REPLACE THE CROATIAN AND SERBIAN LEADERSHIPS", IN THE LATTER CASE BECAUSE OF DECAYED LIBERALISM. TITO COMMENTED THAT "CRISIS SITUATION DID NOT COME FROM BELOW BUT FROM THE LEADERSHIP". THIS ECHOES PREOCCUPATION WITH LEADERSHIP ISSUE EVIDENCED IN HIS DECEMBER SPEECH (BELGRADE 6579).

6. SINCE THE LETTER, TITO SAID, HIS PERSONAL INTERVENTIONS
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INTO CRISIS SITUATION ARE MORE AND MORE RARE AND HE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL NOT BE NECESSARY AGAIN. HOWEVER, ALL IS NOT WELL IN THE PARTY. ACKNOWLEDGING THAT JANEKOVIC WAS RIGHT IN STATING THAT THERE ARE STILL OPPOSITION ELEMENTS IN THE PARTY, TITO SAID THEY CANNOT BE ELIMINATED ALL AT ONCE -- THAT WOULD BE THROWING OUT THE BABY WITH THE BATH WATER. ERRANT PARTY MEMBERS SHOULD FIRST BE REASONED WITH BUT IF IT IS

FOUND THAT THEY CONTINUE TO ERR INTENTIONALLY, "WE SHALL NOT BE LENIENT TOWARD THEM BUT ACT SEVERELY EITHER WITH EXPLUSION FROM THE PARTY OR SOME OTHER PUNSIHMENT". AS AN EXAMPLE OF BAD PARTY MEMBERS TITO SAID SOME

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BELGRADE 748

INDIVIDUALS IN THE SECURITY SERVICE DID A GREAT DEAL OF HARM, INCLUDING THOSE "WHO ENJOYED MY CONFIDENCE (WHOM) I HAD TO STOP FROM ACTING ANY FURTHER".

7. BUT HE RECOMMENDED A SECOND CHANCE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE MENDED THEIR WAYS OR WHO WERE UNJUSTLY EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY. "WE SHALL CORRECT UNJUST AND TOO SEVERE PUNISHMENTS AND DEVOTE GREATEST ATTENTION TO PROVING THE TRUTH".

8. TITO CONDEMNED "DAMNABLE TIES" FAMILY, FRIENDS AND BUREAUCRATIC CONNECTIONS AND ECONOMIC CRIMES AND CRIMINALS, SINGLING OUT THOSE WHO GAIN WEALTH AT THE EXPENSE OF OTHERS, EXPLOIT TAX LOOPHOLES, COMMIT PETTY THEFTS, EMBEZZLE COMPANY FUNDS. IN THE LATTER CATEGORY HE SAID MANY PERONS HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND BIG TRIAL WOULD BE HELD SOON INVOLVING THOSE WHO CAUSED DAMAGE TO FOREIGN TRADE AMOUNTING TO "BILLIONS" OF DINARS. TITO ALSO EXCORIATED YUGOSLAVS WHO ESTABLISHED FOREIGN

BUSINESS CONTACTS AND ACCOUNTS FOR THEIR PERSONAL GAINS. BUT HE SAID THERE WAS NOTHING WRONG WITH WEALTH ACCUMULATED THROUGH "JUST" MEANS.

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9. THE ECONOMY. TITO SAID THAT RETAIL PRICES HAVE BEEN REDUCED AND INFLATION SLOWED DOWN, THOUGH NOT BY HALF AS HIS INTERVIEWER HAD RECENTLY HEARD. BUT HE SAID PRODUCTION PRICES HAVE NOT BEEN TAMED.

10 MEDIA. TITO PLAYED COMMON PARTY THEME THAT THE INFORMATION MEDIA MUST BE RESPONSIBLE TO THE YUGOSLAV SOCIETY AND POLITICAL SYSTEM. THE MEDIA ARE NECESSARY FOR THE PROPER FUNCTIONING OF THE DELEGATE SYSTEM AND THEY SHOULD ALSO HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN OTHER ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS. BUT, TITO SAID, HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND HOW THINGS WHICH NEGATIVELY AFFECT YUGOSLAV RELATIONS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES ARE PUBLISHED IN THE PRESS, WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN SUCH A WAY THAT "WE AFTERWARDS MUST APOLOGIZE THROUGH DIPLOMATIC CHANNELS AND THE LIKE". THE REMEDY, TITO SUGGESTED, IS FOR THE LEADERSHIP TO HAVE MORE CONTACTS WITH THE JOURNALISTS AND TO MAKE SURE THAT EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS ARE PROPERLY QUALIFIED PEOPLE WITH THE REQUISITE EDUCATION IN MARXISM. HE ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT YUGOSLAVIA AND OTHER NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES SHOULD STUDY WESTERN MEDIA METHODS SO THE NON-ALIGNED CAN BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE IN THE UN.

11. WOMEN'S RIGHTS. TITO STATED THERE ARE NOW MANY WOMEN IN THE PARTY'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE. "LET THEM FIGHT WITHIN THE SETTINGS OF THE PARTY". HOWEVER, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE ARE FEW WOMEN IN RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS IN YUGOSLAV SOCIETY AND STATED THAT "THE RARE ONES WORD VERY WELL." IN GENERAL HE DESCRIBED THE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AND BACKWARDNESS OF WOMEN AND THE PETTY BOURGEOIS ATTITUDES TOWARD THEM AS INCORRECT.

12. COMMENT. WE ARE STRUCK BY THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT AIR OF THE INTERVIEW. THE FORTHRIGHT REFERENCES IN IT TO THE POST-TITO ERA ARE UNPRECEDENTED AND MAY REFLECT A CHANGE IN TITO'S PERSPECTIVE ON THE TIMING OF HIS DEPARTURE FROM POWER. HE IS REPORTEDLY PRESENTLY LAID UP AGAIN WITH COMPLICATED SCIATICA--HIS THIRD EXTENDED ILLNESS IN TWO YEARS. THUS HIS ILL HEALTH IS BECOMING CHRONIC. THE UNSUAL RUMORS THAT HE IS MORE SERIOUSLY ILL
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ARE, OF COURSE, MAKING THE ROUNDS. WHETHER OR NOT THEY
HAVE ANY SUBSTANCE, TITO'S PUBLIC CONTEMPLATING ON
MORTALITY PREPARES YUGOSLAVS FOR HIS DEPARTURE "ANY DAY".
WHATEVER HIS STATE OF HEALTH, HIS STATEMENTS ARE ALWAYS
IMPORTANT. THIS ONE DESERVES AND WILL GET FOLLOW UP,
WITH ANY ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS WE MAY ABLE TO DEVELOP.
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